General

Unknown Book
3990

It's the Last Best Party of 1928, held over five days on the grounds of the old Chirnside place in Werribee, Australia, and thrown by the decadent Templar twins, the end of an illustrious English family in possession of a huge fortune and a large following of devoted acolytes. Phryne Fisher has been invited.

At twenty-eight, Phryne is unflappable—if anything, she seems to like "wickedness." She is a Latin-quoting, French-poetry reciting lady with a soft spot for adopted children and the uninhibited erotic practices of the sybaritic Templar twins. Of the party, she says, "It might be dangerous and it will certainly shock you. And I might even want to be shocking myself, you know."

But murder, poisonings, and several stabbing will try anyone's sense of fun. She must solve a se-ries of riddles to uncover "the stone-cold killer" out to murder one of the Templars. With the help of a haplessly infatuated young man at the party, Phryne has to outwit and stop this trickster.

Bound to delight fans of lady detective series from Agatha Christie to Alexander McCall Smith, this mys-tery evokes a time and place in a far-off land, peopled with marvelous, endearing characters, and led by the amusing, acerbic, clever Phryne. After someone attempts, for instance, not "to kill, just to muti-late" with ground glass in her cold cream, she dons her negligee and secures her little gun in her sleeve to investigate. "She needed some answers. And some coffee."

This is the sixteenth book in the Phryne Fisher series by Kerry Greenwood, author of more than forty novels and the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the Crime Writers' Association of Australia. Though contrived, this mystery is not without pleasures. The characters are well-drawn, the dialogue crackles, and the action never flags. The story may take place near Melbourne, but it's nearer still to the opulent center of the jazz age when sex and opium went hand in hand like murder in the dark.